



WANADA Submission on Draft Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Accommodation and Support Strategy 2018-2025

WANADA congratulates the Mental Health Commission on the release of the draft *Western Australian Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Accommodation and Support Strategy 2018-2025* (draft Strategy). The development of this document constitutes a significant milestone in the *Mental Health, Alcohol and Other Drug Services Plan 2015-2025*.

WANADA welcomes the opportunity to be further engaged in the development of implementation/action plans related to this Strategy.

Strategic Linkages and Partnerships

The draft Strategy must operate within a complex system. Effecting and directing positive change within this system requires supporting productive partnerships across multiple levels of government, government agencies, sectors, services, service users and communities.

There is opportunity for the draft Strategy to improve how it captures stakeholder strategic linkages and relationships. In particular the draft Strategy should:

- more clearly demonstrate alignment and integration with other relevant strategies, in particular the WA Homeless Strategy, the Alliance to End Homelessness Strategy, and the WA Alcohol and Other Drug Interagency Strategy; and
- describe the nature of the partnerships between government agencies in policy, planning and procurement, and specifically how the strategy improves these to better address the cross-sector complexity of issues influencing accommodation and housing. Currently, while a range of mechanisms and coordinating bodies are outlined, it is unclear as to how they collectively coordinate and contribute to delivering the strategy.

WANADA recommends: the draft strategy is amended to provide transparency regarding strategic and governance arrangements, so as to demonstrate a cohesive whole of government response to accommodation, housing and homelessness.

Establishing an inclusive approach to systemic change

WANADA broadly supports the vision, aims, principles and key focus areas of the draft Strategy. These inform broad strategic direction for the MHC and stakeholders, within the confines of existing governance and budgetary processes. Further work is required, however, for the draft Strategy to effect inclusive action that delivers systemic change.

It is acknowledged that the draft Strategy has been in development for several years, and has engaged many stakeholders. This process, and the importance of addressing the issues of housing and accommodation support, has established significant expectations amongst

stakeholders, including those consulted, regarding the draft Strategy and intended government action.

WANADA believes that implementation of the draft Strategy, and the process that informs it, is key. The process for delivering the strategy must build a shared approach that enables all stakeholders to collectively work to achieve agreed outcomes, with complementary efforts aligned to the strategy. Such a process must:

- manage and support stakeholder expectations;
- support trustful and open stakeholder relationships;
- enable clear stakeholder role delineation and contribution requirements for delivery of agreed outcomes;
- reinforce the shared purpose intended by the draft Strategy; and
- monitor and prevent the fragmentation of the Strategy through multiple, disconnected implementation plans.

WANADA Recommends the MHC adopt the following approach to support effective implementation.

- **Align the implementation planning between the WA Homeless Strategy and the draft Strategy, including the establishment of fixed year action plans (3 – 4 years in duration) that outline key focus areas and actions to be progressed.**
- **Through an evidenced engagement model enable all relevant stakeholders to develop these action plans, and establish individual and partnership responsibilities for implementation.**
- **Evaluate the action plans, to inform improved processes for future iterations.**

Stigma

WANADA strongly supports the inclusion of stigma within the draft Strategy. The stigma associated with alcohol and other drug use results in systemic discrimination and barriers to achieving outcomes. Noting the significance of the issue, it is important that alcohol and other drug-related stigma is more prominently highlighted, including the need for a unique systemic approach to addressing stigma that reflects current evidence.

WANADA recommends: References to stigma related to alcohol and other drug use is appropriately reflective of evidence.

Terminology

The draft Strategy must inform the strategic direction and practices of many agencies and sectors and stakeholders. There are a range of terminologies used in this Strategy that would/do have different meanings dependent on the audiences' sector and perspective. This risks inadvertent misinterpretation and direction of any implementation. To support a shared, understood approach, the draft Strategy's terminology must be unambiguous. As an example, the broad term "support services" should be clearly defined and framed to ensure the document is uniformly understood.

WANADA recommends: The MHC review all terminology and definitions within the document to ensure they are uniformly interpreted by all stakeholders.